

EXHIBIT 7

Bin Laden's terrorism career began fighting Soviet Union

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The Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan on Christmas Eve 1979, and the call went out to the Islamic world for help in the holy war against Soviet atheism. Osama bin Laden, a wealthy Saudi Arabian, was one of the first to arrive.

The multinational terror network he began building there in the 1980s still is operating throughout the world, making it difficult for the United States to strike at any one group, in any one country.



It also might explain how men from across the Middle East, from Egypt to the United Arab Emirates, are believed to have been involved in Tuesday's attacks on New York and Washington.

Bin Laden initially went to Afghanistan to spend his personal fortune in support of the Afghan mujahideen and to use his family's construction equipment to build mujahideen training camps, roads and military bases.

Financed by Saudi Arabia and other wealthy Gulf-state patrons at an estimated \$20 million to \$25 million a month, bin Laden eventually became responsible for recruiting, training, housing and equipping the 25,000 so-called Afghan Arabs who answered the call to fight the Soviets.

They came from dozens of Muslim nations including Egypt, Algeria, Sudan, Pakistan and Yemen, all that now house clandestine terrorist cells peopled by Arab veterans of the Afghan war against the Soviets.

Arabs were recruited even from Europe and the United States.

For most of the 1980s, the United States funneled money through Pakistan's military and intelligence branches to various Afghan mujahideen groups, in a proxy Cold War against the Soviets.

When the war was over, U.S. interests turned elsewhere. But the Afghan Arabs, financed almost entirely by Saudi Arabia and smitten by radical Islamic ideology, saw the war in Afghanistan as the first step in cleansing the Muslim world of corruption.

"A lot of these people went home and tried to adapt what they learned in Afghanistan," said Jim Phillips, terrorism specialist at the Heritage Foundation. "Their goal is to replace what they see are corrupt Muslim governments. That is why there was a wave of terrorism throughout the Middle East in the early 1990s."

The 1990-91 Gulf war, with the U.S. military presence in Saudi Arabia, helped define bin Laden's mission — to purge the Muslim world of Western influence.

In 1996, bin Laden issued a "declaration of war," on the United States in order to overthrow the Saudi government and "liberate" the Muslim holy sites. Two years later, he informed his followers that private U.S. citizens were fair game.

Mr. Phillips, who has studied and written extensively about the Afghan-Arab phenomenon since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, said bin Laden is believed to direct and finance 3,000 to 5,000 Muslim militants around the world.

Since 1996, his al-Qaeda ("The Base") organization has operated in Afghanistan as an umbrella clearinghouse for Islamic militants in Algeria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Chechnya,

Dagestan, Egypt, Kashmir, Lebanon, the Philippines, Russia, Somalia, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

It has cells in an estimated 50 countries, including the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States, according to a Congressional Research Service report.

Bin Laden has camps in Afghanistan and Sudan for training militants. Two of his most important ideological allies are Egypt's Al Jihad and Gamaat Islamiya. His personal fortune is estimated at \$250 million to \$300 million hidden in about 60 different companies around the world.

"Afghanistan is the vanguard and the incubator for radical Islamic revolutionaries," Mr. Phillips said. "The Taliban made [bin Laden] dangerous because it gave him a place to hole up. ... It is a virus, a transnational pan-Islamic revolutionary movement."

So far, the results of the multi-headed movement have been horrific and spectacular.

His organization and associates are believed responsible for:

- The 1995 assassination attempt on Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak.
- The 1999 bombings in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

• Financing Muslim terror in the southern Philippines, and the 1995 foiled plots to assassinate the pope in Manila, to bomb U.S. embassies in Manila and Bangkok and down several Asian airliners.

- The 1992 bombing of an "American" hotel in Yemen.
- Training the Somalis who killed 18 American servicemen in 1993.
- The 1993 World Trade Center bombing that killed six.
- The 1996 bombing of Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia that killed 19 Americans.
- At least two failed plots to assassinate President Clinton.
- The 1998 bombings of two U.S. embassies in Africa that killed 224 persons,

including 12 Americans.

Secretary of State Colin L. Powell yesterday fingered bin Laden as the prime suspect in Tuesday's attacks, publicly confirming a view shared by half a dozen Western intelligence agencies.

Should the United States succeed in capturing or otherwise eliminating bin Laden, Mr. Phillips said, his chief lieutenant, Ayman Zawahiri, head of Egypt's Al Jihad, will replace him.